

## **Building sustainability on deep values through mindfulness nurturing**

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# BUILDING SUSTAINABILITY ON DEEP VALUES THROUG MINDFULNESS NURTURING

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**Estrella Bernal, David Edgar and Bernard Burnes**

## ABSTRACT

To effectively pursue sustainability, companies need to develop an awareness of the importance of social and environmental objectives in addition to economic. To achieve this, they need to promote a set of shared values in their strategy and cultural change which align global sustainability with organisational performance. To assist organisations with this process and thus identify and nurture their members' underpinning values, we present the *Organisational Presence Model* including a Real Dialogue Methodology. We draw on Lewin's participative approach to change and the deep concept of Mindfulness related to Buddhist precepts, while contributing with a way to initiate Mindfulness nurturing in business context, facilitating its acceptance and practice by organisational members. In our study case we find signs of positive effects of the model in sustainability pursuing. The new strategy has been built aligned with resulting values, that are also perceived by organisational members as inspirational, generating motivation and helping the effective communication that integrates the strategic objectives in the economic, social and environmental aspects.

**Key Words:** Mindfulness, Participation, Deep Values, Organisational Culture, Global Sustainability, Performance.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many definitions of sustainability exist; however, there is general consensus that definitions should include biophysical and human aspects. Works by Bernal and Zografos (2012) and Mabsout (2015) use a comprehensive approach of human being as an individual who interacts with the environment and with other human beings in broader terms, rather than mere competition. In this way, individual wellbeing depends on social wellbeing (including harmonious social relations, where diversity of world views is respected) and on the good condition of the environment.

In agreeing with this approach, any organisation wanting to contribute to global sustainability should be concerned not just with economic performance, but also with its

social and environmental performance. Such concern firstly implies being aware of the relations and impacts that the organisation has within society and the environment, considering organisational members as part of both the inner society (e.g. organisation) and wider global society. So there are two key questions that will lead our research: how to develop the awareness of these existent relations and impacts? And how to develop a culture related to this awareness that allows the organisation to make decisions while harmonizing the three realms of its sustainable performance for business excellence: economic, social and environmental?

Issues of sustainability are perceived as interwoven with the development of an organisation's strategy and the implementation of the changes required to realise it. Indeed, Dunphy *et al* (2007) argue that organisations have a greater part to play in achieving environmental sustainability than either governments or consumers.

For many writers, the key issue to achieve successful organisational change is one of value system alignment (Burnes and Jackson, 2011). In organisational terms, values occur at three levels: the organisational level, as part of its culture, the work group level, as part its subculture, and the individual level, i.e. their own personal values (Cummings and Worley, 2015; Schein, 2010). The importance of values is that they influence behaviour, especially in terms of whether organisational goals and action are judged as right and appropriate in a given situation (Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984; Burnes, 2014; Denison and Spreitzer, 1991; Hofstede and Hofstede, 2004; Neves and Caetano, 2009). Employees who see that a proposed change intervention and the way it is managed is congruent with their own values, their work group's values and the wider organisational values are more likely to be committed to its success than those individuals who perceive a clash of values (Allaire and Firsirotu, 1984; Chonko *et al*, 2002; Diefenbach, 2007; Mrotek, 2001; Neves and Caetano, 2009; Walinga, 2008). It follows that when organisations are attempting to promote global sustainability as an approach to business excellence, they are in effect addressing and attempting to change what those in the organisation consider to be the values with which people can commit themselves to. In order to do so, they need to understand the values which underpin people's beliefs and ensure that their organisation has or can adopt values which align with sustainability and these beliefs. However this cannot be done by imposition, since people will only address and change their values if they are allowed to do so freely and through open participation (Burnes and By, 2012).

So the problem we try to address is how to face the change needed in strategies of the organisations seeking to pursue global sustainability as an approach to excellence.

We believe the model we will propose can assist organisations in facing such change.

As a first step of the model, we developed a methodology which acted as a framework for assisting managers of an industrial company in identifying their underpinning values and understanding them as a base for cultural and strategic change. This can be extrapolated to other organisational context.

## **2. A PROPOSED MODEL OF ORGANISATIONAL PRESENCE TO PURSUE GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY**

### **2.1 Organisational Values and Change**

In terms of organisational change, it is argued that the values embodied in the type of change, e.g. cutting jobs or enhancing skills, and way that it is managed, e.g. imposed or participative, also need to be aligned with the organisational, work group and individual values of those concerned (Burnes and Jackson, 2011).

Kurt Lewin in the 1940s is generally seen as the first person to draw attention to the relationship between value alignment and successful change (Benne, 1976). Lewin recognised that change often creates instability, which can lead to resistance if change challenged existing values (Burnes, 2007). However, Lewin's approach to change, which is based on change participants learning about themselves, their current situation and what needs to change, offers not only a way of avoiding resistance but also of addressing the issue of how to identify current and develop new values (Burnes, 2004).

Lewin developed an ethical-participative approach to change that has proved remarkably robust (Burnes and By 2012; Burnes and Jackson, 2011). Ethics deals with 'how humans treat other beings so as to promote mutual welfare, growth, creativity, and to build a shared meaning and to strive for what is good over what is bad and what is right over what is wrong' (Thiroux and Krasemann, 2007: 27). Lewin did not believe that people could be tricked or coerced into change instead he believed they would only fully commit to change if they saw it as right in the circumstances. He argued that behavioural change is most successful if individuals and groups are given the opportunity to reflect on and learn about their own situation, and change of their own volition (Burnes 2004; Lewin 1947).

Nevertheless, though Lewin's work to change makes it an appropriate foundation on which to build an ethical approach to change, by itself it does not fully address the issue of how to bring about change when individual, group and/or organisational values are not aligned. This was because when Lewin died he had not fully developed significant research areas, such as value alignment (Burnes and Cooke, 2012). Therefore in the next section, we

propose to link Lewin's work to the concepts of Mindfulness and Presence as a means of aligning values with proposed changes and a deeper sense of ethics.

To summarise, there is support for the view that successful change is associated with the value alignment of three factors: the values of those involved in the change intervention, the objective of the intervention (in our case contributing to global sustainability) and the approach to change (i.e. the values underpinning the content of the change and the process by which it is managed). If the concept of value alignment is valid, then it is not sufficient for organisations to ensure that the objective of the change intervention is congruent with the organisation's values; they would also need to ensure that the approach to change adopted is congruent. Research by Burnes and Jackson (2011) shows that this is a valid proposition and one which does lead to successful change. However, what about cases where there is not alignment between those involved in the change intervention and the objective of the intervention? In such a situation, what is required is not an approach to change which is aligned with either the people or the objective, but an approach which can ethically create alignment between these two. In this instance, we need an approach to change which can create value alignment between the organisation's values (i.e. its members' values) and the values which lie at the heart of our objective which is the search for sustainability.

## **2.2. Mindfulness, Presence and Deep Values**

Mindfulness has its roots in Buddhism, but was brought to Occident by Dr. Kabat Zinn mainly with the objective of stress and pain reduction. Mindfulness means "paying attention in a particular way: on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally" (Kabat-Zinn, 1994:4).

Many studies (Byron et al., 2015; Crane & Kuyken, 2013; Dariotis et al., 2016; Foukal et al., 2016; Harris et al., 2016; Jha et al., 2017; Klatt et al., 2017; Malinowski & Lim, 2015; Mann et al., 2016; Reb et al., 2017; Russell et al., 2016; Schussler et al., 2016; Sharp & Jennings, 2016; Verdorfer et al., 2014; Zemestani & Ottaviani, 2016) show that Mindfulness works not only when different aims are pursued in different spheres of society, health and education systems, but also in corporations. In particular as Van Gordon et al. (2016, p:78) show, in the work place "*mindfulness has been shown to lead to significant improvements in employee mental health outcomes, including anxiety (...), depression (...), stress (...), burnout (...), sleep quality (...), and dispositional mindfulness (...). Mindfulness has also been shown to improve employee physical health outcomes (...). Furthermore, mindfulness in the workplace has been linked to job performance in various ways, including (i) client-*

centered empathic care in health-care professionals (...), (ii) positive organisational behavior (...), (iii) organisational innovativeness and performance (...), and (iv) work-related self-efficacy.”

We agree with Van Gordon et al. (2016:78) when they state that “contemporary mindfulness as it is operationalized in mindfulness-based interventions such as Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (...), does not always meet the traditional Buddhist criteria for authentic mindfulness”. In effect, meditation in the original Buddhism source should not have any specific aim, nor purpose for the life, it is instead a transcending way of continuous self-inquiry to discover the authentic essence of the self-human nature, which is conceptually a mystery and cannot be put into words, but can only be experienced by the meditator and tested by the master as the meditator’s real experience.

Mindfulness as originally contributed by Kabat Zinn is more akin to a sort of therapy to improve health and other times as a form of training to develop certain personal skills or competences. While it can be used in business, or to enhance learning capability as in education, it always pursues a certain aim, while not always involve an ethical or inner commitment of the meditator of self-enquiry or with contribution to the collective, or any other aspect that transcends the selfhood. In this sense, an authentic Mindfulness having its roots in Buddhism is a transcending way of self-enquiry in the authentic essential nature of human being that is empty from any particular objective for life. In other words, an authentic meditator longs for transcending selfhood by perceiving his/her real inner human nature but not for any particular reason (e.g. more powerful, wiser or any personal wish).

However while authentic transcending meditators don’t have any particular aim, the fact is that meditation improves many personal capabilities, as Van Gordon et al. (2016:79) show with the promising results of Second Generation Mindfulness Based Interventions based on the Noble Eightfold Path. The teaching of the Eight Fold Path is common to all the various manifestations of Buddhism, and all other kinds of Buddhist practices can be subsumed under these categories (Mabsout, 2016).

In the meditation state, when communication with one’s self is clearer, within tranquility, it is easier to perceive what the own essential values are (Bassett, 2013). These values are more connected with the essence deep inside a person, which although it cannot be conceptualized or put into words, manifest itself in life through behaviours guided by these values. When there is the real spiritual way being developed by the meditator, these values are in harmony with the Noble Eightfold Path (Bodhi, 2010) and make the person behave according to the perception of unity with everything that exist and respecting every

living being as part of oneself (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2000). We will call these values arising from the experience of unity “deep values” and they constitute what we call “deep ethics”.

But as the alive oral transmission from Sanbô-Zen school teaches, in general people are overwhelmed by mental dialogue mixed up with social values. Such social values are experimented as inertial embodied tendencies, which are “*habituations and predispositions that unreflectively shape our everyday responses. In other words, they are patterns of saying and doing that are passed on by society through individuals without necessarily passing through consciousness. They do not arise from beliefs, rules or principles. Rather they are shared know-how and discriminations*” (Chia and MacKay, 2007:232). It is this mental and inertial dialogue that doesn’t allow to the person to perceive the deep values as essential human values (Lamberton, 2005).

Sanbô-Zen school also teaches that when a person starts meditating for the very first time, even if it is made with an aim or purpose, she/he gets a deeper conscious level where these deep values have a chance to emerge at a certain level. This level of emergence is higher the more the person trains enough not to pay attention to the mental dialogue or any emotion but to breathing in present moment and if in parallel the person develops an attitude of greater loyalty to the deep values abandoning more and more the personal aims or purposes. This is therefore a process where consciousness unfolds in which the practice brings gradually more and more the capability of paying that attention and perceiving more the deep values. Figure 1 represents this process of consciousness as a spectrum, at the top living conditioned by the unconscious (inertial embodied dispositional tendencies) and the bottom total consciousness of enlightenment. The top square of Figure 1 (beginning of the process) is what Van Gordon et al. (2016) understand as a Mindfulness (originally introduced by Kabat-Zinn, 1994) that when it is practiced, it does not always meet the traditional Buddhist criteria for authentic mindfulness; the other end of the spectrum (bottom of Figure 1) is what we call Eastern Mindfulness or Presence as the one that is rooted and follows the Buddhist precepts of the Noble Eightfold Path, this is what Van Gordon et al. (2016); call “Authentic Mindfulness”.

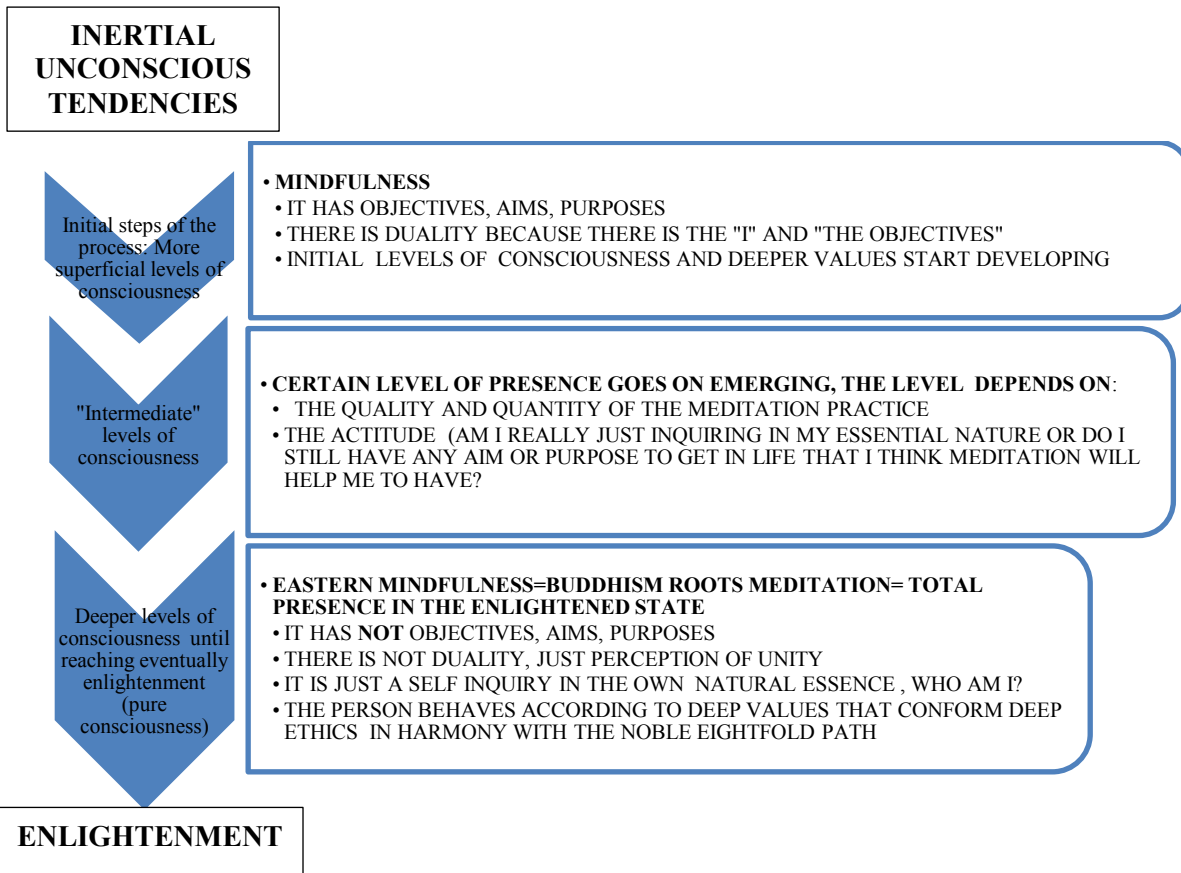
Polzin et al (2015) explain that Authentic Mindfulness weaken the illusionary concept of self and strengthen the insight into non-self, so a better understanding of non-self may be gained by considering the existence of different stages of insight. Our Figure 1 would represent these different stages of insight (consciousness) from which the state of Presence would be a very advanced one when authentic Mindfulness is being practiced.

One remarkable difference between the advanced stage of Presence and the initial one of Mindfulness is that this initial Mindfulness implies a purpose with an active intention to get it, whether it is avoiding old ways of thinking and behaving to be completely alert in present moment, or any other purpose we identify with Mindfulness. This means somehow selecting and judging what is not accurate according to the established intention. Such judgments belong just to the mind, not to the reality and prevent the individual from seeing reality in all of its wideness and therefore block the opportunity to adapt to it (Dhiman, 2008). On the other hand, Presence removes any reaction to what is not accurate according to the purpose by avoiding judging because there isn't any purpose, it really consists of just paying attention to breathing with an intense and open awareness to anything happening in the present moment (internally and externally), accepting whatever it is. This gives more opportunities for adaptation, overall in complex rapidly changing environments. Dhiman (2008) explains deeply this art of "paying attention to attention". Nevertheless, we want to remark that, as Sanbô-Zen school teaches, acceptance without judgment doesn't mean that practitioners cannot discriminate among what is right and wrong to guide their behavior. On the contrary, the practice gives a very clear ethical reference based on the Noble Eightfold Path as a guidance of own behavior. When something contrary to this guidance happens, attention is not put into judgments, but on the present moment to accept it as part of the reality and use the energy of the next breathing to act according to what the Buddhist Precepts bring, in the level that each practitioner is able to develop them. Mabsout (2015:89) explains: *"as mindfulness grows, the valuing of experience grows with it, and the mind is more present in the world, not disengaged from it. Accordingly one is more present in one's actions, as behaviour is more responsive and aware. This understanding of freedom is diagrammatically opposed to freedom as doing whatever one wants"*.

According to this sense of deep ethics, the concept of Presence in our model introduces this higher ability for adaptation and change, but also two human values that are fundamental to the Buddhist precepts of the Noble Eightfold Path: compassion and openness to unity perception, which is the experience of the unique essence that is common to every living being.



**FIGURE 1: The consciousness development process**



In this conceptual map deep values constitute the most essential part of an individual but might not be shown by the person because of a fear of conflict with other dominant organisational and/or every day applied inertial values, as well as because of a fear of becoming vulnerable for this reason. Nevertheless at the same time such very deep values reflect the essential nature of each individual and therefore its natural talent, and will be lost for the organisation if they are not nurtured and allowed to emerge. For this reasons, we introduce the need of Individual Mindfulness Nurturing.

### 2.3 Individual Mindfulness Nurturing

Though senior management support is vital in order to develop corporate values that address care and respect, by itself it is insufficient to actually change culture (Schein, 2010). There may be some rare occasions where a crisis can lead to imposed culture change, however, in the main, this rarely occurs (Burnes, 2014; Schein, 2010). This is because, as Cummings and Worley (2015) show, culture change is a slow process of identifying and agreeing what is wrong with the existing culture and developing a new one. As Schein (1996) argues, this can be a painful process of ‘unlearning’ and ‘relearning’, which requires the

engagement of most of an organisation's members in identifying, understanding and accepting of their own volition deep values on which the new culture will be built (Cummings and Worley, 2015; Schein, 2010). In this, mindfulness training plays a crucial role by enabling people to perceive what their deep values are and behaving in accordance with them.

We define Individual Mindfulness Nurturing (IMN) (included in Figure 2) as a process which starts in parallel with training people in the total attention of body and mind, in the present moment, and with the support of a culture that takes care of people as complete human beings. This is a culture with deep respect for the diversity of mental maps or world visions, and that also takes care of the natural environment and society. The reason for setting out this sort of culture is to provide a scope wide enough for Mindfulness to develop and to point to the necessary aspects in which a company has to perform if it pursues global sustainability: economic aspects, social performance including caring and respect for diversity, and the environmental aspects.

#### **2.4. Real Dialogue and Authentic Social Relations**

In biology of knowledge (or cognition) terms, Presence is the source of love as defined by Maturana and Varela (1987). These authors define scientifically the emotion of love as *“a relational biological phenomenon consisting of a behaviour or class of behaviours through which “the other”, emerges as a legitimate other person in the closeness of conviviality, in circumstances where the other, could be oneself. This, in the understanding that the others legitimacy is constituted by behaviors or operations that respect and accept her/his existence as it is, as a phenomenon of mere acceptance of the other person beside us in our daily living. Legitimacy of the other and respect for him or her are two ways of relation congruent and are complementary reciprocally implicated. Love is a biological phenomenon inherent in animals' relational scope, which in mammals appears as a central aspect of cohabiting in the intimacy of maternal - infant relation in total corporal acceptance.”* (Ruiz, 1997)

In this meaning love implies recognizing the “other” as a fellow being with the same essential nature as “I” have as a person – i.e. as a “Thou” in the sense defined by Kofman and Senge (1993). This produces the consciousness to be aware of the legitimacy of every person's view, as well as the legitimacy of every living being and live systems existence, and therefore deep respect for all of them. (Maturana, 1987) states that this is the biological foundation of social phenomena and of what he calls Authentic Social Relations (ASR) based

on equality relations and not on power subordination. Without love, without acceptance of others living beside us there is no social process and, therefore, no humanness. *“Anything that undermines the acceptance of others, from competency to the possession of truth and ideological certainty, undermines the social process because it undermines the biologic process that generates it”* (Maturana 1987:246-247).

In this context, the attitude on establishing relationships within the organisation is that “the other” has an existence and experiential domain that is just as valid as that of the “I” itself. So, the language and consequent description of the world produced by the other’s experiential domain will be considered equally legitimate. ASR are the only ones that can create Real Dialogue (RD), where people can trust others enough to articulate what they really feel and think, and not what they think they are supposed to tell according to the dominant values. RD and ASR facilitate the emergence of deep values (together with different world views that such values represent) to configure a culture that respects them and also respects the elements from the society and natural environment with which the organisation interacts.

RD contributes to accept and better understand the views of the others creating an experiential domain for the group that for each individual is wider than her/his initial individual experiential domain (Maturana, 1978). For this reason initially conflicting interests that could not get aligned within every individual’s narrower experiential domain, can get aligned in this other wider domain of the group. This understanding of the other’s view happens more easily the more people are trained in Mindfulness and they gain more insight into non-self while approaching deeper levels of Presence. That is why IMN is necessary.

In practical organisational terms RD builds on a real participative process, which means adaptive management with feedback based on trust to express real beliefs. In our theoretical conception, such trust emerges within the process of Mindfulness nurturing in the way of consciousness development showed in Figure 1, together with the gradual emergency of the aforementioned values of compassion and openness to unity perception.

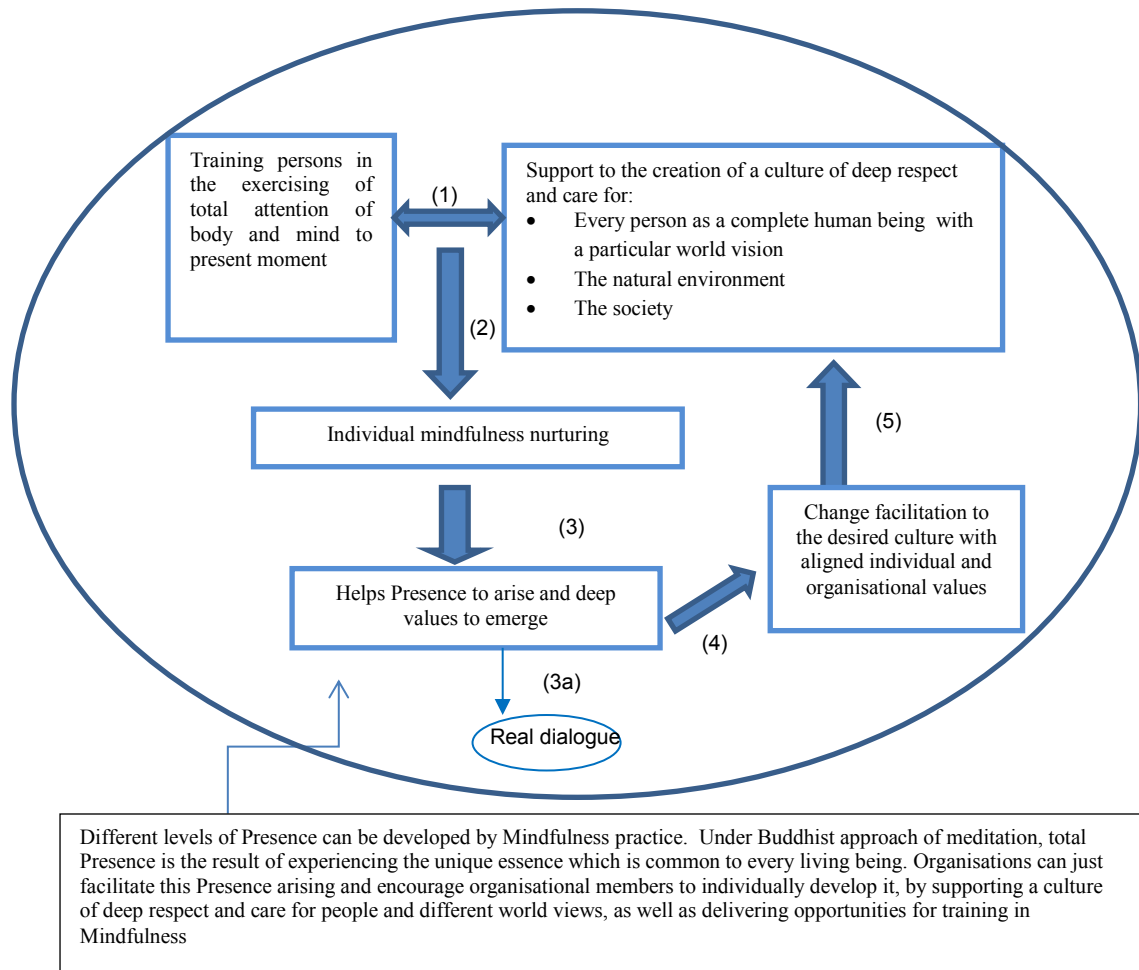
This is therefore a training process for all the staff and managers because it leads them to a more integrative way of thinking related with complexity.

As explained, our participative approach to change is based on Lewin's work and its three key elements are: firstly, that participants must be free to make their own decisions, secondly, that they need to be guided by a neutral facilitator, and lastly, that change must be a learning process for the participants. We use RD to achieve the first and last of these. In terms of the second element, we ensure that facilitation in our methodology supports the participants' decision-making and learning, but remains impartial.

## **2.5. Organisational Presence Model**

Figure 2 maps the process from IMN, leading to Presence and change and to a culture aligned with global sustainability contribution. We call such process Organisational Presence (OP). In the next paragraph we explain the five steps of this process (see Figure 2 for each step). (1) According to Thomas (2006), FitzGerald (2012) and Bassett (2013), the training in total attention and support of the deep respect and caring culture reinforce each other. (2) This reinforcement starts the process of IMN as we defined in section 2.3. (3) Drawing on Dhiman (2008) and discussion of section 2.2, we can affirm that individual Mindfulness, as the beginning of the consciousness process shown in Figure 1, supports the emergence of Presence and deep values. (3a) This allows people to identify their own and the organisation's deep values and to achieve RD (Maturana, 1978 & 1988). (4) Having identified new, more appropriate individual and organisational values, the process of aligning these begins (Gärtner, 2013). (5) Burnes (2014) states that this emergence of deep values will facilitate the pursued change to a culture that facilitates global sustainability performance, through deep respect and care for people and the natural environment as an interrelated system.

**FIGURE 2: Organisational Presence Model, Organisational Presence as a result of Mindfulness Nurturing –Presence-Change circular process**



Sources: (1) Thomas (2006); Bassett (2013); Fitzgerald, S. (2012). (2) Definition of IMN, section 2.3 (3) Dhiman (2008); 3a. Maturana (1978, 1988). (4) Gärtner, C. (2013). (5) Burnes 2014.

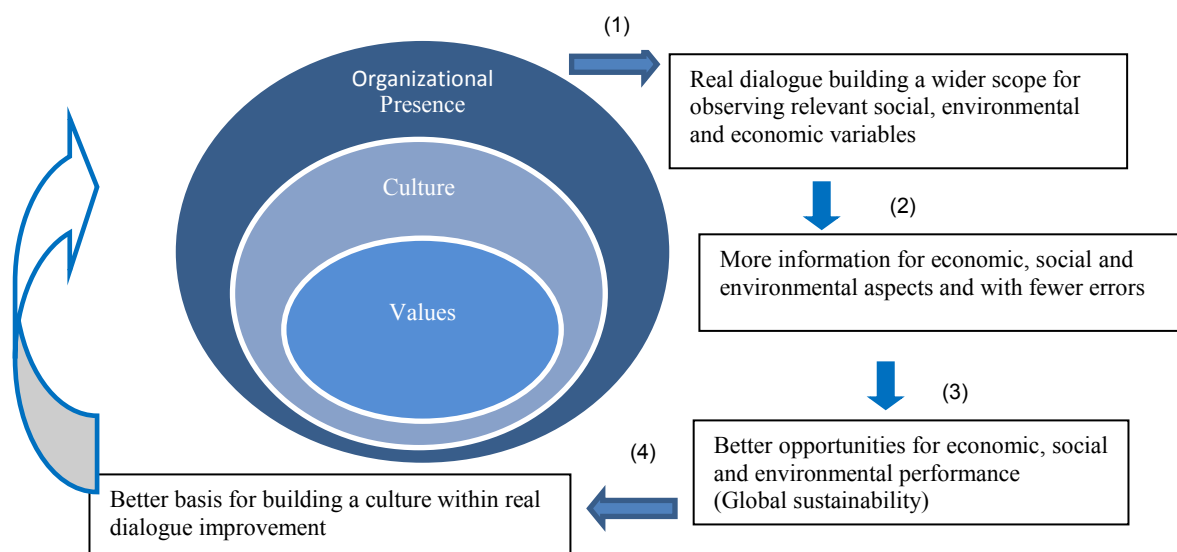
## 2.6. Hypothetic Effects of Organisational Presence in Global Sustainability

Figure 3 summarises these effects in four steps as bellow:

(1)The OPM implies a state of Presence that can start being developed through Mindfulness training and thus incorporated into the culture of the company. This develops the organisational members' ability for total attention to the present moment and their own deep values. According to the premises of biology of knowledge this would result in RD (Maturana 1978, 1988), across the organisation and intrinsically each individual keeping in touch with her/his most genuine part and offering the best personal potential to the rest. Thus turning deep personal values into embodied behaviours. Most of the time, deep most genuine personal values cannot be perceived in the daily routine. However, total attention to the present moment helps them emerge (as we will see in our study case). With the best potential

of each individual through presence, the organisation gets a wider scope for observing relevant social, environmental and economic variables. (2) Based on works by Stanton, Chambers & Piggott (2001) and Herndon (2008), it can also provide more information for economic, social and environmental aspects and with fewer errors. (3) Taking into account other works (e.g. Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992; Dane & Brummel, 2014) the situation would therefore lead to better opportunities for economic, social and environmental performance. (4) For Bernal and Edgar (2012), global sustainability pursuing implies caring for RD, which according to our OPM (Figure 2) will help the process for further individuals Presence development, creating a virtuous circle, in constant change and feedback.

**FIGURE 3: Effects of Organisational Presence in Global Sustainability**



Sources: (1) Maturana (1978, 1988). (2) Stanton, Chambers, & Piggott (2001), Herndon (2008). (3) Eisenhardt & Zbaracki (1992); Dane, E., & Brummel, B. J. (2014). (4) Bernal and Edgar (2012).

Therefore, a culture that nurtures mindfulness of links with society and the environment gives the organisation a higher perspective of the socioeconomic and environmental variables influenced by its activity. In other words, the organisation is able to perceive, observe, analyze, and shape a higher range of social and environmental variables with which it interacts. We can infer therefore that the decision making process will be more aligned to reality and therefore more responsible for it. If we observe this decision making process under the scientific method, we are building a more reliable result from inception since we are widening the range of reality being observed. This decreases the possibility of leaving relevant variables out of consideration, not only external variables to the

organisational members, but also internal psychological-emotional variables of the individuals that can be a determinant of different outputs given a particular decision.

In summary, our OPM establishes the relationship between Mindfulness and sustainability supporting Ericson Kjøenstad & Barstad (2014) proposition in this aspect.

### **3. REAL DIALOGUE METHODOLOGY (RDM)**

The methodology we use introduces the first two steps necessary to create the process of OP shown in Figure 2; we term this Real Dialogue Methodology (RDM). These two steps are introduced within a participative process where values cannot be imposed but are voluntary accepted and shared.

As discussed in section 2.2 Presence requires participants to follow a voluntary and honest transcending way of meditation which is a long process that has a starting point. Therefore in this research, the starting point of training participants in total attention of body and mind to present moment did not bring them to deep Presence, but it brought them to a state of calm and attention to present moment that allowed access to parts of themselves which in their words “are not accessible in an everyday mad work routine”

As participants were unaware of the concept of Mindfulness, fear of the unconventional or of “being different” could have impacted, making work colleagues feel vulnerable and uneasy. This fear can block the whole process. As such, we presented the Mindfulness technique, (which was less known than it is today), with the scientific roots of Caycedian sophrology with a longer tradition in Occidental culture than Mindfulness. We presented sophrology as a way to start experiencing what total attention to body and mind is, since it has the rational support that exercises start with a contact and alliance that gives a meaning to the exercises for the participant. It is like a kind of objective that reduces anxiety of beginners when they suddenly have to pass from frenetic activity to calm in front of their colleagues.

Explaining Caycedian Sophrology, Fiorletta (2010) states that objective reality is closely linked with a phenomenological approach to consciousness. Voluntary control of respiration is at the heart of Caycedian sophrology, relaxation is the bodily starting point. Focusing attention on living the present moment and the phenomena attached to that moment leads to a state of living which activates consciousness. This activation of consciousness, understood in sophrology terms, is our Mindfulness training.

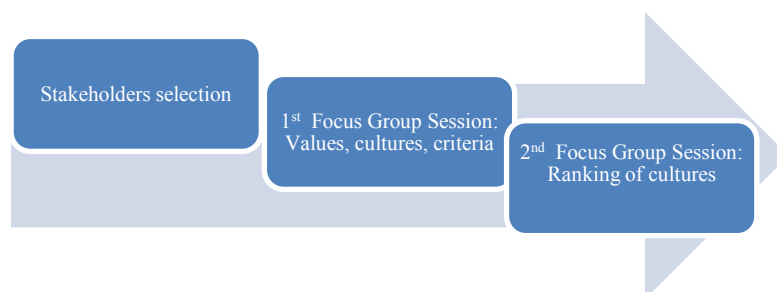
We have used Nominal Group Technique - NGT (Delbecq & Gustafson, 1975) as a participation method since it prevents the group from any participant wanting to adopt a protagonist role and thus reduces any dominant view. Our RDM modifies NGT by adding a number of refinements and contributions that will be explained in the next section.

### 3.1. Applying RDM

We applied the framework to a production plant (80 staff) of an industrial multinational (9000 staff) which is not listed on the stock exchange. This company was willing to implement a new strategic plan and to do so, they asked for help using our RDM in order to determine a set of values which their people could commit to. As a pilot project, we started with a focus group in one of the divisions of the company operating in the United Kingdom (UK Division) in 2012. During 2013 the process was developed in the whole organisation, taking all the 53 managers of the company as participants in six focus groups, and in 2017 the research was concluded by considering final results of change.

The RDM is formed by the stages in figure 4.

**FIGURE 4: Stages of RDM**



We will explain the stages through the pilot project experience in UK:

### 3.2. Stage 1: Stakeholders Selection

In the UK division, Corporate Human Resources top managers, trained in the main concepts of RDM, had a meeting with the main responsible people of the division in the UK and decided on the eight different stakeholders for the focus group. This focus group represented different job roles and sensitiveness related with them. Participants were leaders respected by their teams and colleagues: 1 - Effluent treatment plant process engineer. 2 – Health, Safety, Quality and Environment manager. 3 - Accountant responsible for analytical accounts. 4 - Senior Utilities plant engineer. 5 - Part of the original project team responsible



for electrical installations. 6 – Human Resources responsible. 7- Engineer Responsible for comparing energy and financial balances of the productive processes. 8- Plant manager. This cross section of sample represented an excellent overview of the perspectives of the whole organisation.

### **3.3. STAGE 2: Focus Group-First Session: Values, future cultures and criteria**

#### *3.3.1. Identifying values*

This session was designed to orientate respondents to their deep values based on their self-perceived best personal potential. The facilitator was a senior Mindfulness practitioner with 14 years of intense experience who followed a special meditation program before the meeting.

Mindfulness exercises helped participants to pay attention to their inner self. According to Ostafin and Kassman (2012) this gives the participants access to their deep creative level, which contributes in a much more powerful way than traditional NGT to the generation of ideas. It is our first contribution to NGT.

Participants then had 15 minutes of individual reflection to rationalize the values they could perceive in themselves or in their colleagues to help excellent performance of the company in the best future, in the economic, environmental and social aspects.

Each one was asked to choose the six most important ideas of values that they would then share with the rest of the group according to NGT rules. Table 1 shows the value statements with which participants explained each reflected value.

**TABLE 1: Ideas emerging from first focus group stage**

Initial number of value statement	VALUE STATEMENT	VALUE
1	I always try to treat people how I would expect to be treated	Respect
2	I try and live within my own means	Responsibility
3	I recognize that my lifestyle has an impact on society as a whole.	Compassion
4	We work stronger together	Teamwork
5	Respect internal and external stakeholders	Respect
6	Follow rules and decisions taken by competent people although I don't understand them	Discipline
7	I share ideas and learning with others	Networking
8	Learn from mistakes that have been made and improve	Learning
9	I work better when happy	Mental well being
10	I like to stick with something until it gets done	Determination
11	I consider the best use of resources to meet goals	Efficiency
12	I learn from my mistakes, experience and successes.	Learning
13	I try to adapt my behavior to other people's needs	Empathy
14	I think of new ways of doing things in order to continuously improve performance	Continuous Improvement
15	I try to match my actions with my words	Integrity
16	I enjoy being able to improve the skills and knowledge of colleagues	Mentoring
17	I like what I do	Enthusiasm
18	I am always ready to help colleagues in any way that I can	Support
19	We must be honest with our internal & external stakeholders.	Honesty
20	Prioritize job over family	Irresponsibility
21	I get a great sense of achievement from improving difficult relationships	Open minded
22	We are the masters of the worlds fate a society is stronger together and weaker apart	Teamwork-unity
23	I achieve more when working as a member of a team	Teamwork
24	I like to consider others point of view	Empathy
25	I work towards providing the best financial information to provide stability for the company	Financial Stability
26	I strive to be innovative to push boundaries.	Innovation
27	Change position within the company and adapt as fast as possible	Flexibility
28	I strive to deliver	Results oriented

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Then, under the RD atmosphere created, an open, long (1.5 hours) and intense debate was conducted to clarify any aspects about values definition by the participants, as well as to group the general ideas of Table 1 in final values of Table 2. There were five original ideas that participants didn't group because they did not find them to belong to or comprehend any other value idea. Therefore these ideas had entity by themselves and were just renumbered as 12 to 16 in Table 2.

**TABLE 2: Final values.**

NUMBERS OF GROUPED VALUES	ITEM=GROUPED IDEAS	FINAL ID.NUMBER OF EACH GROUPED ITEM
4, 22a, 23	Teamwork	1
3,22b	Sense of Community	2
8,12	Continuous learning	3
2,25	Financial responsibility	4
14,26	Innovation and Improvement	5
9,17	Enthusiasm	6
13,24	Empathy	7
7,16,17	Supporting each other	8
1,5	Respect	9
15,19	Honesty/Integrity	10
10,28	Determination/tenacity	11
	<b>RENUMBERED ITEMS</b>	
6	Discipline	12
11	Efficiency	13
20	Responsibility/Irresponsibility (work-personal life balance)	14
21	Open mindedness	15
27	Adaptability	16

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491 *3.3.2. Identifying cultures and Criteria*

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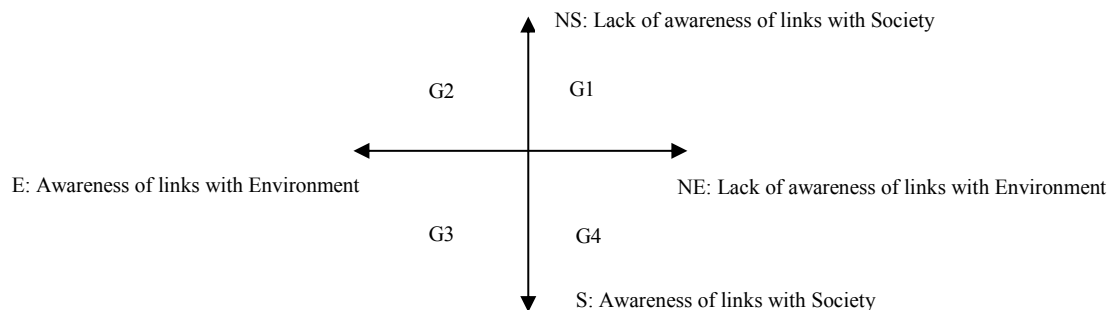
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In table 2 we obtained the current existing values at that moment, but to generate a new culture, we tried to place these in the most coherent future culture taking concern for sustainability into account. Since a strategy of change, for what values are to be used, means a long run perspective, we used scenario planning. This explored possible future cultures based on the different evolutions of Fundamental Dimensions of Change (FDC). As defined in Scenario-Based Strategic Planning, FDC are forces around which the whole properties of the system change creating different future scenarios. FDC in our study case, led to different possible cultures which were proposed as future scenarios for values to develop. In this context, we adapt Bernal and Zografos (2012) scenario planning FDC due to its utility to generate future organisational culture scenarios more or less aligned to the aim of global sustainability performance. In this fashion, our FDC are defined as the degree of awareness that organisational members will be able to develop from now on regarding their own personal links and those of the company to the rest of society and to the environment (axis x and y of the Future Cultures Quadrant Model (FCQM) -Figure 5). The current values placed

within the FCQM link the current existing culture to the culture that supports performance of the company for Global Sustainability. FCQM is our second contribution to traditional NGT.

**FIGURE 5: The future cultures quadrant model**



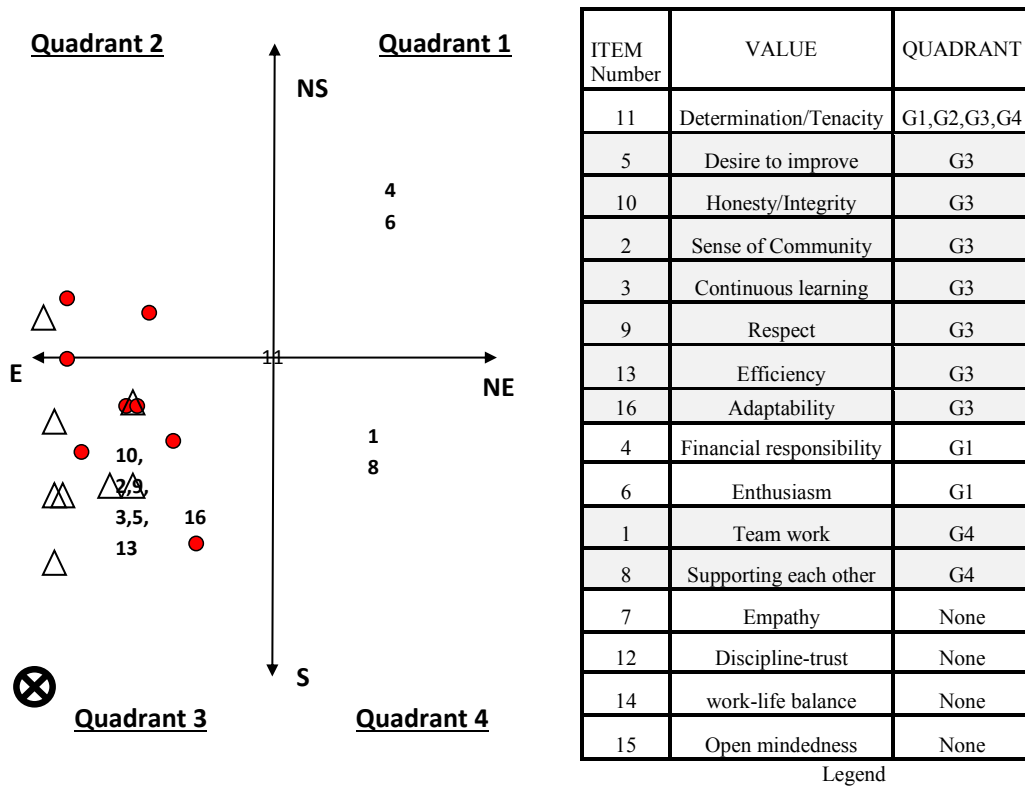
The group agreed the mapping of table 2 values as Figure 6 shows, considering the FCQM.

At this point participants placed a circle in the quadrants representing where they thought the company's real culture was placed at that time. Afterwards they placed a triangle in the quadrant where they thought the company's overall culture would be 15 years into the future, taking into account the variables they were most worried about, (we used their inertial way of perceiving, without calling attention to present moment). Finally after a new Mindfulness exercise, we asked where they thought the company's culture could be, and would like to be, using the best potential of every organisational member, drawing a big cross in a circle in the quadrant (Figure 6).

Figure 6 shows that most of the values are identified with a scenario G3 (values with numbers 2,3,5,9,10,13,16 of Table 2), where awareness of social and environmental links are developed (3<sup>rd</sup> quadrant). But there are also values identified in scenarios G1(values with numbers 4,6 of Table 2) and G4 (Values numbers 1,8 of table 2) where there is no awareness of any link, or just awareness of links with society. Value number 11 was identified in the four scenarios. Nevertheless, the current situation of the company at that moment (circles) was placed by most of the respondents in the scenario at the point where awareness exists of both kinds of link. All of them except one placed triangles (culture in 15 years' time) in the scenario where awareness exists of both kinds of links in quadrant 3.

The values empathy, discipline, work/personal life balance, and open mindedness weren't featured by participants in any of the quadrants and represented what we call emergent values.

**FIGURE 6: Results of the Quadrant Model applied.**



If we observe the circles, representing the current situation at that moment, these coincide closely with where environmental and social links awareness values are placed. On the other hand, everybody would wish to be where the big black cross in a circle is, quite far away from the current situation. This means that the emergent values are still not part of the current culture and not yet fostered, again highlighting the possibility of being developed by further Mindfulness nurturing. As such, we define a fourth group of values, termed “Emergent Values”, which are related with creativity, personal authenticity and real presence of the best part of every individual. They represent a culture still to be created and fostered to support the current one to reach the desired point for global sustainability. So the three cultures G1, G3, G4 and this last group of “Emergent Values” (EV) will be the four cultures of values relating to sustainability identified in the company. The values of G3, and overall EV can be nurtured through Mindfulness Nurturing to start the process of OP that can lead to a good performance in global sustainability.

Participants expressed as criteria (two criteria in each of the three areas: economic, social and environmental), the aspects that would lead each participant to rate a certain group of values in the organisation as better or worse than another in terms of its contribution to overall sustainability. Initial ideas of appraisal criteria were grouped to avoid duplication and to consolidate or unify ideas that were complementary (Table 3).

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**TABLE 3: Agreed Merged Values Criteria**

<b>MERGED CRITERIA</b>
Financial efficiency
Company Growth
Financial responsibility
Competitiveness by means of costs and investments control
job security / opportunities
helping society short term
Helping society long term
Mutual respect inside and outside the company
Innovation creation
Environmental short term impacts
Environmental long run impacts
Environmental local impacts
Global Environmental impacts

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### 577 3.4. Stage 2: Focus Group- Second Session: Ranking

578 Once we had the four cultures and the appraisal criteria, participants ranked the four  
579 cultures in two different ways, ranking A and ranking B as below.

580 **Ranking A:** Just before starting ranking A, another Mindfulness exercise was used in  
581 order to show participants the possibility of preventing difficulties in balancing body and  
582 mind and accessing their deep values that can derive from negative emotions or daily  
583 experiences. Then participants were asked to rank the four cultures in terms of their  
584 contribution to achieving the company's aim of global sustainable performance in terms of  
585 the economic, social and environmental criteria agreed by them and shown in Table 3. Each  
586 culture was rated with 1, 3 or 5 points for each of the criteria in accordance with the  
587 following premise: *"If the aim of the company is a global sustainable performance in the*  
588 *three aspects, how would you think the different groups of values would help to improve each*  
589 *one of the different criteria you proposed?"* Averages were used to calculate the final  
590 ranking.

591 The result was that when facilitating participants to think in a complex way, taking all  
592 the criteria into account and using a previous Mindfulness exercise, the raking of preference  
593 about cultures is: G3, G1, G4 and EV.

594 **Ranking B:** After a break to take distance from ranking A, participants were asked to  
595 rank the cultures rating them from 1 to 4. They were asked to base their ranking on their  
596 normal day-to-day experience of the company and its needs, calling on their general personal

criteria of what they think is good for the company and placing now their attention in their inertial everyday way of perceiving problems without more introspection.

Table 4 shows the percentage of points awarded to each culture under the two ranking schemes. Under Ranking A the results were: G3 – 36%; G1 – 24%; G4 – 21%; EV – 19%. Under Ranking B the results were: G3 – 34%; G1 – 34%; G4 – 19%; EV– 13%.

In terms of Ranking A, where participants judged the four cultures in terms of global sustainability and under a more conscious perception (trained with the Mindfulness exercise), the results are interesting. Given UK Division history where the NGT took place, one might have expected that the Economy element of the approach to sustainability, as expressed by the value of financial responsibility in culture G1, would be seen as the most important. Instead, this is ranked second by quite a large margin. The top ranking is given to G3, which incorporates the Society and Environment elements of Sustainability. Cultures G4 and EV are rated lower than G1, though not by a large margin. This seems to reflect their role as underpinning and emerging values necessary to support both G3 and G1.

**TABLE 4: Culture Rankings**

CULTURES	Ranking A Global Sustainable Performance (with introspection attitude)	Ranking B Good for the Company (with inertial attitude)
<b>G3 - Links with Society and Environment:</b> Desire to Improve, Honesty/Integrity, Sense of Community Continuous learning, Determination/Tenacity, Adaptability, Respect, Efficiency	36	34
<b>G1- No Links with Society or Environment:</b> Financial Responsibility, Determination/Tenacity, Enthusiasm	24	34
<b>G4 – Links with Society but not Environment:</b> Teamwork, Supporting Each Other, Determination/Tenacity	21	19
<b>EV – Emergent Group:</b> Empathy, Discipline, Work-Life Balance, Open-Mindedness	19	13

In terms of Ranking B, where participants judged the four cultures in terms of what they thought was good for the company under an inertial perception, these results are also

interesting. As might be expected, G1- financial performance – is ranked first, but so too is G3; while G4 and EV come some distance behind these two cultures.

#### **4. RESULTS OF RDM IN THE ORGANISATION**

After the 2012 RDM pilot project in the UK, an implementation of the methodology in the whole multinational happened during 2013. Then there were three years of working with the resulting organisational shared values in which trade unions participated, in order to agree on the corporate culture definition. In January 2017 Chief Human Resources Officer reports a complete acceptance of the values across the whole company. The strategy has been built aligned with these values since 2012 and they have been used in the CEO meetings since 2013. As a result, the new 2020 strategy has been built aligned with these values and specific targets identified (see Table 5). This is a huge behavioral change within the company from a traditional industrial paper production company with no notion of sustainability as a comprehensive concept of economic, social and environmental performance. Before 2012 the company showed a lot of interest in environmentally friendly productive processes, but mainly motivated by profitability. To better understand this point we present the following milestones:

- Corporative Environmental reports show from 2012 to 2014 clear improvement of environmental variables with no indication of any social performance in them. As a consequence the reports are entitled “Environmental Report” rather than “Sustainability Report”.
- These environmental results are not only the result from the Mindfulness intervention. As environmental reports since 2005 show, the company had been taking decisions before 2012 mainly to have more economically efficient productive processes, although they also involved technical efficiency in the use of resources.
- However, after 2012, and especially in 2016 there is a clearer commitment with technical efficiency, searching processes that save energy and reduce gas emissions. To the point that the company produces energy with secondary processes of waste management that are enough to supply all the company’s needs of energy and it also provides energy to the power supply network.
- It is not until 2016 that there is also a commitment with concrete objectives for 2020 to contribute to a circular economy of zero waste. In 2016 the environmental report appears



under the web link “sustainability of the company”, starting to comprehend the whole concept of sustainability with all its implications.

In summary, investment decisions that generate productive processes more economically and technologically efficient were taken before 2012. These improved the quantity of recycled raw materials as inputs and saved a certain quantity of gas emissions (2005-2006 and 2012-2014 corporative environmental reports). Nevertheless, it was not after 2012 that it took place the clear investment decisions that had as results: drastically reducing raw materials and increasing of the quantity of recycled raw material, complete energy saving and clearly reducing gas emissions, as well as improving water management in quantity and quality.

As far as the social aspects of sustainability are concerned, in the 2016 report, where the particular environmental targets for 2020 appear, the president of the company introduces the new shared values that resulted from the process that started with our participative Mindfulness intervention. These values included looking after people inside as well as outside the company. In contrast with this bottom up approach, in the previous report of 2012 the president uses a clear top-down approach when stating that the application of the ethical code, approved by the board of directors is compulsory for employees. So the approach before and after the mindfulness intervention is a significantly different paradigm. Therefore people can commit now better with the new explicit targets. The board of directors has enough trust in their accomplishment as to specify a concrete quantity to target for each indicator. It is not that our intervention created new values in people, what happened is that people were conscious of sharing their deep values with others in the company. In this way values that were in people but that had not been shown explicitly because of fear of not being accepted by the group, were legitimized organisationally. This means a support for people behaving according with their deep values creating more wellbeing and commitment to the culture, strategy and targets of the company.

Although not included in 2016 report, in 2017 the Chief Human Resource Officer informed about positive indicators in social performance. These indicators reflected:

- The employment created for the company for handicapped and marginalized young people in collaboration with an insertion association from the community of the territory in which the company headquarter is placed.
- Advances perceived by workers of gender balance and labor-work life balance.

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Therefore, we can say that environmentally friendly investment decisions were related to economic efficiency before the mindfulness intervention. But after this intervention, the board of directors together with the management of the company realized the shared deep values that generated commitment to incorporate the social aspect of sustainability and to accomplish the concrete 2020 environmental targets. People feel cared for and they care for the company. The care for the people and not just for the environment is one of the key new shared values of the culture supporting the new strategy that our mindfulness intervention helped to emerge. This social aspect, builds the coherence of sustainability that was incomplete in the company before the mindfulness intervention.

The new values are also perceived by organisational members as inspirational, generating motivation and helping the effective communication that integrates the strategic objectives in the economic, social and environmental aspects. Effective communication helped shareholders to internalize the new values and to understand that the strategy for a holistic performance is generating value for them in both short and longer term. Within this communication shareholders manifest now to feel a closer part of the society to which their company contributes and commit the necessary investment ready to execute to make the new strategy fully implemented.

**Table 5: Environmental achievements and future environmental targets**

	<b>Products and raw materials</b>	<b>Energy</b>	<b>Water</b>	<b>Green House emissions</b>	<b>Waste</b>
<b>Commitments</b>	Calculate the environmental impact of our products using Life Cycle Assessment	Pare back the Group's consumption of fossil fuels and increase renewable energy use	Reduce the pollutant load discharged at Division 1.	Reduce Group-wide greenhouse gas emissions.	Achieve Zero Waste.
<b>2020 goals</b>	Maintain EuCertPlast certification at Division 3	Increase renewable energy use by 25% against 2015 levels.  Cut the use of natural gas by 3% against 2015 levels.	Reduce tones of N and P discharged by 20% against 2015 levels.  Reduce tones of Total Suspended Solids discharged by 10% against 2015 levels.	Cut absolute CO <sub>2</sub> emissions by 3% against 2015 levels.  Cut NO <sub>x</sub> emissions at division 1 by 50% against 2015 levels.	Achieve Zero Waste at all Group plants.
<b>Environmental Achievements 2015-2016</b>	Division 4 obtained Forest Stewardship Council Recycled certificate.  Low density polyethylene waste recovered to produce recycled pellets	Fuel oil no longer used at our facilities.  Increased use of biofuels by 13% against 2014 usage.	Participated in CDP Water <sup>1</sup> with a Scoring of B in 2015.	Calculation of Scope 3 emissions at Division 1.  Tool to calculate Scope 3 emissions for Division 3  Reduced group-wide CO <sub>2</sub> emissions (Scope 1 + 2) by 0.9% against 2014 levels.	Increased recovery rate by 1% to 89.7% at division 1 and division 2 in 2016

Source: Sustainability report of the company (2016)

## 5. DISCUSSION

What is remarkable about our participants in the pilot project was the degree to which they achieved honest dialogue from quite early in the process. Key to this was the Mindfulness training that enabled them to feel safe in identifying and articulating their personal beliefs and values. This openness was evident even in their first session together. Participants practiced the Mindfulness exercises at the beginning of every session.

The difference made by the Mindfulness training can be seen when participants were asked to rank the four cultures in two different ways. Though it had been expected that asking them to use two different rankings schemes would lead to a difference in emphasis, the magnitude of the difference was greater than might be expected. When participants were

<sup>1</sup> CDP's water scoring methodology assesses the responder's progress towards water stewardship evidenced

<https://www.cdp.net/fr/campaigns/commit-to-action/water>

asked about the reason for the differing results, they reported that in terms of Ranking A, the Mindfulness exercises allowed them to break away from short-term worries and take a longer-term perspective. However, in undertaking Ranking B, in which Mindfulness exercises were not taken into account, they felt more influenced by short-term financial considerations and fears.

The participants felt that using the two different approaches for ranking the cultures helped them to understand better the gap between the current organisational culture in terms of sustainability and where it needed to be in the longer term. They also observed that the emergent values represented by culture EV were necessary to drive long-term behavioural change, but that at present they were undervalued and underutilised. This is why in Ranking A, EV was considered nearly as important as G1, but in Ranking B it was seen as considerably less important.

Not only did the Mindfulness-based approach enable the participants to identify short-term and long-term scenarios for their organisation, but it also enabled them to understand their and their organisation's present values and how to align them for the future.

When we extended the RDM process to the whole organisation, we find very similar effects of Mindfulness training. Moreover, the 5 years process since 2012 seems to have gone not just through the RDM implementation, but also through a certain level OPM implementation. In particular it found that a RD building occurred within the 3 years process with agreement of the corporate shared culture, and new strategic objectives that deliberately pursue economic, social and environmental performance.

Moreover, through the effective communication based on new shared values, the new strategy has now the support (also financially) from the shareholders as well as of the CEOs to be fully implemented. Therefore shareholders' investment can be understood as another indicator of behaviour change, as a consequence of the RD that Managers generated all around the company with the help of deep values emerged after the intervention with Mindfulness.

Therefore, the behavioural changes are:

- Environmental and Social achievements in 2015-2016
- Greater commitment with new values and targets of the company
- Concrete quantifiable environmental targets for 2020
- Support of the shareholders to the new strategy dedicating economic resources to it.

We believe that real accomplishment of such strategy will need full OPM implementation in the sense of a deeper development of mindfulness nurturing at the organisational level, as well as a bigger commitment by individuals to their own Presence development. However, this is an ambitious task since it involves an everyday practice with discipline and determination. The results reached this far in the study case make us think about the plausibility of OPM positive effects for contribution to sustainability in our studied enterprise and highlight the need for more attention to the field.

Summarizing, RDM points out the gap between organisational values and those deeper values of the individuals related to sustainability. This leads to the described process in Figure 2 of the OPM as a way to close such gaps. RDM initiates the participants to Mindfulness, helping their deep values to emerge as well as to explore possible future cultures in which they feel these values can be shared. Whether the individuals-organisation values gap will be closed or not and the OPM will unfold for company contribution to sustainability, depends on two elements: (i) that a culture made from deep shared values is further fostered by the organisation, and (ii) that Mindfulness practice is adopted individually for the long term by organisational individuals.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

If organisations wish to perform for sustainability, then this will require them, to be conscious of their values and be self-critical enough to see where it is necessary to make a change that leads to building real values of commitment with society and environment. In order to assist them in doing this, this paper has presented our OPM. The model draws attention to the inability of top-down, directive measures to achieve changes to values. In place of this approach, the model proposes the need to create RD through a combination of Lewin's participative approach to change and the concept of Presence as an advanced state of Mindfulness practice that also follows the Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhist tradition as an ethical guide.

We believe the OPM can help organisations and their members to begin the move to global sustainability by surfacing the deep values of participants and relating them to their total presence in present moment.

As an initial part of the OPM, we have developed a RDM drawing on the concept of Mindfulness Nurturing as a way of nurturing emerging values and creating a wider perspective that allows for a cultural change in organisational strategy. We have shown that RDM enables participants to explore their deep personal values and helps them to reflect in a

state of total attention to the present moment using a broader and deeper awareness to prospect possible future cultures. This is done through democratic participation complemented with sophrology techniques as a more understandable introduction to Mindfulness for the uninitiated. The step of total attention without reacting or judging has to be lived at every present moment (leading Mindfulness practitioners to Presence), and needs collaboration from individuals by undertaking Mindfulness training and using it in their personal life. Individual Presence facilitates ASR of equality and acts as a base for acceptance of every world vision. Accordingly, the final result of applying RDM to the whole staff of an organisation should be a RD through the creation of a language for the human group and facilitating the change to a shared culture of values that opens a wider scope for observing relevant social, environmental and economic variables. This provides for better opportunities to achieve good performance in global sustainability, which in reality is what the Chief Human Resources Officer reported happening three years after implementation of RDM. This is supported by the evolution of environmental and social indicators of the company since 2015.

## **7. LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH**

Our OPM is a full theoretical model just implemented empirically in its first steps of digging out deep values shared for the targeted culture and strategy change. Although the company went on further to design the sustainability strategy for 2020, research is needed to contrast if the implementation of the strategy based on a culture made of shared values by RD, really improves economic, social and environmental performance in the next years by following the different indicators that the company has already started to monitorise. The limitation of the model is the personal commitment needed by organisational members with the practice of Mindfulness which is not easy to get. In any case, the fact that there is a leading company in an important industrial sector that is already adopting this approach, betting on it for the next decade strategy and making an important investment to accomplish it, gives an idea of OPM utility for the most innovative companies that pursue sustainability.

## **GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS**

ASR: Authentic Social Relations

FDC: Fundamental Dimensions of Change

IMN: Individual Mindfulness Nurturing

NEP: Noble Eightfold Path

812 NGT: Nominal Group Technique  
 813 OP: Organisational Presence  
 814 OPM: Organisational Presence Model  
 815 RD: Real Dialogue  
 816 RDM: Real Dialogue Methodology

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